



ROYAL NORWEGIAN  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

NORWEGIAN STATEMENT TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE OSCE

As delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Espen Barth Eide,  
at the Ministerial Council Meeting,  
Skopje, North Macedonia, 30 November 2023

Thank you very much, Bujar.

Let me recognize the Chairpersonship-in-Office and the Secretariat for their excellent work under very difficult circumstances. That is exactly what we need in these times of serious challenges to the organization and to the purposes it represents.

The Helsinki Final Act that so many have referred to was set up at a time where we agreed about very little, because we were in the middle of the Cold War. But we did agree that the borders should be inviolable and that there should be respect for fundamental human rights.

Thirty years ago, when the CSCE turned into the OSCE, it was a time of opportunity and hope in new opportunities. Many countries emerged stronger with strong democratic institutions, stronger civil society and better respect for minority rights. The OSCE played a key role in fostering that. We are much better off in the Euro-Atlantic Area than we would have been without it.

But it was also a decade of challenges and problems, and some of our countries, unfortunately, descended into communal violence and internal strife and conflict. This country, the host country North Macedonia was among those who were feared would do so. Yet, North Macedonia actually managed to avoid it thanks to the leadership, the people and the communities of this country, but also thanks to the support from many of us through this organization and other organizations. It is an example, and it was indeed the first ever country to receive an OSCE mission.

What we did not see, neither after 1975 nor after 1993, was the flagrant violation of international law in the form of classic interstate conflict, the invasion of one country into another. This is exactly what the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act were set up to avoid. The Russian aggression in Ukraine is a unique circumstance that is not comparable to anything we have experienced over the last, almost 50 years.

Such actions have consequences and that is why so many of us now are reminding each other that our support for Ukraine and Ukraine's course is unwavering. This should not entail a weakening of our organization. On the contrary, we need an OSCE which emerges stronger, more powerful and more effective from this. Norway strongly echoes the statements made by others on the need to ensure the implementation of a unified budget, as well as a full extension of the mandates of the top four key positions.

I commend North Macedonia, and Bujar personally, for what they have done. I congratulate Malta and thank them for taking on this crucial and important task. I also want to recognize and thank Estonia for showing the will to be flexible at such a difficult time. We deplore the reasons why, but we commend the efforts that were made to find a solution.

Thank you for the attention.